

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/846,134

Examiner

Romain Jeanty

Applicant(s)

GROSVENOR ET AL.

Art Unit

3623

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to 11/20/06 and 11/27/06.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1, 3-5, 12, 19-23, 25-29, 31-34.
3. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
 - a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
 1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.

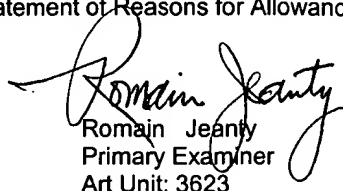
Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
 5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
 - (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
 - 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
 - (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☐ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date _____
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6. ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date _____
7. ☐ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other _____


Romain Jeanty
Primary Examiner
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Examiner's Amendment

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

In the claims:

The claims below represent the pending claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of automatically identifying and resolving one or more discrepancies in an outsourced manufacturing supply chain in which a plurality of supply chain partners participate, the method comprising the computer-implemented steps of:
communicating to a direct contract manufacturer a forecast for a product, wherein the
direct contract manufacturer is a manufacturer of the product and is a supply
chain partner in the plurality of supply chain partners;
receiving a master schedule and a gross demand for the product from the direct contract
manufacturer;
receiving first supply chain event information representing one or more first supply chain
events from three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective levels
of a supply chain at a database with which each of the supply chain partners
[[may]] communicate over a network;
periodically applying one or more rules to the first supply chain event information;
generating one or more alerts pertaining to one or more discrepancies that are found in
the supply chain event information, based on applying the rules;
communicating ~~in a substantially concurrent way~~ one of the alerts to the three or more
supply chain partners at the three or more respective levels of the supply chain
who are participating in a transaction to which the discrepancies relate;

- receiving second information that represents a second supply chain event that resolves the alert; [[and]]
resolving the alert in the database based on the second information; and
periodically escalating the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received.
2. (Canceled)
 3. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in Claim [[2]]1, wherein the step of periodically escalating the alert comprises the steps of:
determining a set of one or more new unsent alerts;
consolidating the set of new unsent alerts by rule and by recipient;
sending the consolidated alerts to each recipient in a message that is organized by rule.
 4. (Original) A method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the step of receiving first supply chain event information further comprises the steps of:
receiving the first supply chain event information in the form of one or more electronic documents that are formatted as Partner Integration Process documents in a staging database;
validating the electronic documents according to Partner Integration Process standards;
importing only those electronic documents that are validated successfully into an alerts database that is logically separate from the staging database.
 5. (Original) A method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the steps of generating and resolving further comprise the steps of:
periodically evaluating one or more existing alerts that are stored in an alerts table of the database;
determining whether a particular existing alert is marked as resolved; and

removing the particular existing alert from the alerts table.

6-11 (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in Claim [[5]]1, wherein periodically applying rules comprises the steps of:
- receiving a set of updated manufacturing resource planning (MRP) data from a first supply chain partner;
 - applying a MRP Profile rule that results in generating a user interface display that summarizes how the supply chain is affected by one or more changes reflected in the MRP data.

13-18 (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium carrying one or more sequences of instructions for automatically identifying and resolving one or more discrepancies in an outsourced manufacturing supply chain in which a plurality of supply chain partners participate, which instructions, when executed by one or more processors, cause the one or more processors to carry out the steps of:
- communicating to a direct contract manufacturer a forecast for a product, wherein the direct contract manufacturer is a manufacturer of the product and is a supply chain partner in the plurality of supply chain partners;
 - receiving a master schedule and a gross demand for the product from the direct contract manufacturer;
 - receiving first supply chain event information representing one or more first supply chain events associated with three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective levels of a supply chain, wherein receiving the first supply chain event information includes receiving the first supply chain information at a database

with which each of the supply chain partners [[may]] communicate over a network;
periodically applying one or more rules to the first supply chain event information;
generating one or more alerts pertaining to one or more discrepancies that are found in the supply chain event information, based on applying the rules;
communicating ~~in a substantially concurrent way~~ one of the alerts to the three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective levels of the supply chain who are participating in a transaction to which the discrepancies relate;
receiving second information that represents a second supply chain event that resolves the alert; [[and]]
resolving the alert in the database based on the second information; and
periodically escalating the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received.

20. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for automatically identifying and resolving one or more discrepancies in an outsourced manufacturing supply chain in which a plurality of supply chain partners participate, comprising:
means for communicating to a direct contract manufacturer a forecast for a product, wherein the direct contract manufacturer is a manufacturer of the product and is a supply chain partner in the plurality of supply chain partners;
means for receiving a master schedule and a gross demand for the product from the direct contract manufacturer;
means for receiving first supply chain event information representing one or more first supply chain events from each of at least three supply chain partners at least three respective levels of a supply chain at a database with which each of the supply chain partners [[may]] communicate over a network;
means for periodically applying one or more rules to the first supply chain event information;

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means for generating one or more alerts pertaining to one or more discrepancies that are found in the supply chain event information, based on applying the rules;

means for communicating ~~in a substantially concurrent way~~ one of the alerts to at least three of the supply chain partners at three or more respective levels of the supply chain who are participating in a transaction to which the discrepancies relate;

means for receiving second information that represents a second supply chain event that resolves the alert; [[and]]

means for resolving the alert in the database based on the second information; and

means for periodically escalating the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for automatically identifying and resolving one or more discrepancies in an outsourced manufacturing supply chain in which a plurality of supply chain partners participate, comprising:
- a network interface that is coupled to the data network for receiving one or more packet flows therefrom;
 - a processor;
 - one or more stored sequences of instructions which, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to carry out the steps of:
 - communicating to a direct contract manufacturer a forecast for a product, wherein the direct contract manufacturer is a manufacturer of the product and is a supply chain partner in the plurality of supply chain partners;
 - receiving a master schedule and a gross demand for the product from the direct contract manufacturer;
 - receiving first supply chain event information representing one or more first supply chain events from three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective

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levels of a supply chain, wherein receiving the first supply chain event information includes receiving the first supply chain information at a database with which each of the supply chain partners ~~[[may]]~~ communicate over a network;

periodically applying one or more rules to the first supply chain event information;
generating one or more alerts pertaining to one or more discrepancies that are found in the supply chain event information, based on applying the rules;

communicating ~~in a substantially concurrent way~~ one of the alerts to the three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective levels of the supply chain who are participating in a transaction to which the discrepancies relate;

receiving second information that represents a second supply chain event that resolves the alert; ~~[[and]]~~

resolving the alert in the database based on the second information; and
periodically escalating the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received.

22. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for automatically identifying and resolving one or more discrepancies in an outsourced manufacturing supply chain in which a plurality of supply chain partners participate, comprising:

a network interface that is coupled to the data network for receiving one or more packet flows therefrom and is configured to communicate to a direct contract manufacturer a forecast for a product, wherein the direct contract manufacturer is a manufacturer of the product and is a supply chain partner in the plurality of supply chain partners and receive a master schedule and a gross demand for the product from the direct contract manufacturer;

an alerts subsystem that is communicatively coupled to a database table that includes first supply chain event information representing one or more first supply chain events from three or more supply chain partners at three or more respective levels of a supply chain;

rule logic that is communicatively coupled to the alerts subsystem and that is configured to periodically apply one or more rules to the first supply chain event information and generate one or more alerts pertaining to one or more discrepancies that are found in the supply chain event information, based on applying the rules; and

alert delivery logic that is communicatively coupled to the alerts subsystem and that is configured to communicate ~~in a substantially concurrent way~~ one of the alerts to the three or more supply chain partners at the three or more respective levels of the supply chain who are participating in a transaction to which the discrepancies relate; wherein the rule logic further is configured to receive second information that represents a second supply chain event that resolves the alert and to resolve resolving the alert in the database table based on the second information; and

wherein alert escalation logic further is configured to periodically escalate the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as recited in Claim ~~[[24]]~~22, further comprising an administrative subsystem configured to enable an administrative user to create and store one or more values that define the pre-defined parties and one or more other characteristics of the supply chain partners.

26. (Original) An apparatus as recited in Claim 22, further comprising user interface generating logic that is configured to generate one or more user interface pages for delivery to a logically separate display station, wherein one of the user interface pages

- comprises a summary view of one of the alerts, and includes one or more links to detailed views of information related to the one of the alerts that is shown in the summary view.
27. (Original) An apparatus as recited in Claim 22, further comprising user interface generating logic that is configured to generate one or more user interface pages for delivery to a logically separate display station, wherein one of the user interface pages comprises a summary view of one of the alerts, and includes one or more links to detailed views of information related to the one of the alerts that is shown in the summary view, wherein the links are selected from among a plurality of links relating to all alerts and include only links that specifically pertain to the one of the alerts that is shown in the summary view.
28. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the supply chain partners include a set of supply chain partners with no direct contractual relationship with others of the supply chain partners.
29. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 21, wherein the supply chain partners include a set of supply chain partners with no direct transactional relationship with others of the supply chain partners.
30. (Canceled)
31. (Currently Amended) The apparatus as recited in Claim ~~[[30]]~~21, wherein the instructions for periodically escalating the alert comprise:
instructions for determining a set of one or more new unsent alerts;
instructions for consolidating the set of new unsent alerts by rule and by recipient;
instructions for sending the consolidated alerts to each recipient in a message that is organized by rule.

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32. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as recited in Claim 21, wherein the instructions further comprise:

instructions for receiving the first supply chain event information in the form of one or more electronic documents that are formatted as Partner Integration Process documents in a staging database;

instructions for validating the electronic documents according to Partner Integration Process standards;

instructions for importing only those electronic documents that are validated successfully into an alerts database that is logically separate from the staging database.

33. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as recited in Claim 21, wherein the instructions further comprise:

instructions for periodically evaluating one or more existing alerts that are stored in an alerts table of the database;

instructions for determining whether a particular existing alert is marked as resolved; and

instructions for removing the particular existing alert from the alerts table.

34. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as recited in Claim 21, wherein the instructions comprise:

instructions for receiving a set of updated manufacturing resource planning (MRP) data from a first supply chain partner;

instructions for applying a MRP Profile rule that results in generating a user interface display that summarizes how the supply chain is affected by one or more changes reflected in the MRP data.

Allowable Subject Matter

2. Claims 1, 3-5, 12, and 19-22, 25-29, and 31-34 are allowed.

Reason for Allowance

3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance

The closest prior art is to Hancock U.S. Patent No Stowell et al (U.S. 20020099579). Stowell discloses a system that provides performance-based evaluation of partners that enables better selection of partners, better business relationships between partners and easier communication between partners. However, Stowell et al fail to teach resolving the alert in the database based on the second information, and periodically escalating the alert to one or more pre-defined parties associated with each of the supply chain partners who are participating in the transaction to which the discrepancies relate, until the second information is received as recited in independent claims 1, 19, 20-22.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

4. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

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- a. Rierden (WO9724691 A1) discloses a method for allowing users to track and manage business tasks for delivering product and services.
- b. Gourley (WO051038 A1) discloses a method for managing inventory control.
- c. Ulieru et al (A Multi Agent system for On-line fault Recovery of Intelligent Manufacturing Systems) discloses detecting a discrepancies for manufacturing a product. Note page 851 of Ulieru.
- d. Rupp et al (Fine Planning for Supply Chains in semiconductor supply chain) discloses discrepancies between planning and production in a supply chain system.
- e. Richards et al (Flow of orders through a virtual enterprise their proactive planning and scheduling, and reactive control) disclose

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Romain Jeanty whose telephone number is (571) 272-6732. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 7:30 am. to 6:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq R. Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.


Romain Jeanty
Primary Examiner
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